

5 July 1957

This study not transmitted -- superseded by 8 July 57 study

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY (NIS)

1. The experience of the United States in World War II brought home forcibly to all leaders of government the crucial need for basic intelligence on all foreign areas of the world to provide the basis for planning courses of action in event of U.S. involvement in another war. Representative of the consensus of those leaders is this statement of the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, to the Chief of Naval Operations in a letter written in 1945:

"Our experience in this war has effectively proved that if the United States is to have the necessary basic intelligence available for early planning of possible operations, it is essential that such intelligence be collected, collated, published, and distributed -- i.e., ready to use---prior to the beginning of hostilities."

2. To assure the fulfillment of this vital intelligence requirement the National Security Council established, by NSCID No. 3 dated 13 January 1948, the interagency National Intelligence Survey Program, with the fundamental mission of developing the basic intelligence required by the Government in the event of another war. All agencies of Government are charged with contributing to the NIS Program to the extent of their capabilities in the field of basic intelligence. Responsibility for the over-all coordination of NIS production and maintenance, and for accomplishing the review, publication, and dissemination of the NIS, rests with the Director of Central Intelligence.

3. The NIS Program is steadily fulfilling the mission set for it by the National Security Council. During almost nine years of operation a total of nearly 3,500 sections has been produced, representing 65% of total world coverage, principally on areas of high priority established by the Joint Chief of Staff, and published NIS are being revised at an increasing rate each year under the maintenance program to keep them up to date. NIS coverage of the Sino-Soviet Bloc Areas is essentially complete and under active maintenance; similar coverage should be realized by next year for nearly all areas in Western Europe, the Near East, and the Far East. These are significant contributions to the National Intelligence effort and attest to the consistently strong, coordinated support of

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some 40 government activities which contribute to the NIS.

4. Related to the NIS Program are the foreign geographic name gazetteers which are finding extensive use throughout the Government. NIS Gazetteers comprising nearly two million geographic names have been produced to date and essentially cover all foreign areas of the world. The gazetteers also are now under active maintenance to increase name coverage.

5. The NIS has been utilized in ever increasing measure in recent years to reflect new, or changing requirements in the basic intelligence field. NIS treatment of topics and production programs have been adjusted as appropriate to cope with these developments. One of the more significant of such developments was the activation of a program on International Communism with the mission of conducting greatly expanded research in the field, and production of comprehensive basic intelligence on this complex activity under the NIS Program. Another was the production of the NIS on Antarctica in addition to regularly scheduled production to satisfy a priority requirement of the OCB for basic intelligence on Antarctica to serve as a basis for policy discussion relating to negotiations on the existing, or potential rights of this government on that area.

6. Since the start of the NIS Program there has been a continuing awareness of the importance of assuring that the NIS was in consonance with the needs of the Government, and that it was fulfilling requirements adequately. To that end a survey was conducted of the NIS users in both the Washington intelligence community and in the field to ascertain their views in the light of their experience with the NIS. The findings served to confirm the judgment of the NSC that the NIS is necessary to the fulfillment of essential basic intelligence requirements of our Government. The findings reflected the considered opinion of government officials who are actually engaged in the intelligence and operational activities which use the NIS extensively in carrying out their official missions, and they are, therefore, among the most competent and best qualified individuals in government to pass judgment on the need and value of the NIS. Illustrative of such opinions are the examples listed in attachment hereto (Tab A).

7. While the fundamental mission of the NIS Program is to develop the basic intelligence required by the Government in the event of another war, and to have that intelligence ready to use prior to the beginning of hostilities, it will be noted from the attached comments that the NIS has proved to be an extremely valuable intelligence tool under present conditions as well, to both high level users for whom the NIS is primarily intended, and to lower echelons of Government which it serves in a variety of ways. The degree of usefulness to the latter varies considerably, of course, because of the difference in functions and missions of these secondary users.

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8. Reaffirmation of the need for, and worth of, the NIS Program is also contained in the report to the Congress on intelligence activities by the Clark Task Force of the Hoover Commission wherein it is stated:

"The National Intelligence Survey is an invaluable publication which provides the essential elements of basic Intelligence on all areas of the world. While its production involves an extensive and expensive effort, all members of the Intelligence community derive an immediate benefit from the contributions they make to it and profit from the final product. There always will be a continuing requirement for keeping this survey up to date."

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